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ABSTRACT

This digest focuses on the use of technology in the supervision of counselors. Each generation of new technology, from audiotapes and videotapes to fax machines and virtual reality, creates challenges and opportunities for the counseling supervisor. Increased use of computer-related technologies has given this generation of supervisors new ideas for integrating technology within both practicum and internship stages of training. At the practicum stage of supervision, technological aids can be used in both live and delayed supervision. At the internship stage, advances in electronic connectivity present several innovative possibilities for more efficient internship communication. There are limitations of technology and ethical considerations including confidentiality that must be considered. The digest concludes that from practicum to internship, strategies for improving the supervision experience can be utilized with the appropriate ethical integration of technology. Contains 8 references. (NB)

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ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON Counseling And Student Services

ERIC DIGEST

April 1994 EDO-CG-94-25

Use of Technology in Counselor Supervision

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Overview

Each generation of new technology, from audiotapes and videotapes to fax machines and virtual reality, creates challenges and opportunities for the counseling supervisor. Increased use of computer related technologies has given this generation of supervisors new ideas for integrating technology within both practicum and internship stages of training.

Practicum: Networked Computers, Personal Digital Assistants

At the practicum stage of supervision (when students work with actual clients under direct supervision), technological aids are rapidly opening up new windows of opportunity for both *live* and *delayed supervision*.

Live supervision

The telephone and the "bug-in-the-ear" are probably the two best known traditional methods of live supervision. A supervisor, observing a session from an adjacent room through a one-way mirror, sends and receives messages to the counseling students as the session progresses. One limitation of these approaches, however, has been its disruptive intrusion on the counseling process.

More recently, two *networked computers* have been employed to accomplish the same interchange (Neukrug, 1991). The supervisor observing behind the mirror transmits messages by keyboard entry to the supervisee, who reads the messages and can respond similarly with keyboard entry to the supervisor.

Two networked computers offer additional opportunities. A client completing a standardized instrument online, such as the Diagnostic Interview for Children and Adolescents-Revised™ (Reich et al., 1990), could receive the results during the same session. Persons in the observation room could send additional interpretative hypotheses, aided by access to databases either on CD-ROM locally or through modem and telephone link to a remote location, to the supervisee.

Whether networked computers offer less disruptive intrusion than the telephone or "bug-in-the-ear" is an open question. New advances in *personal digital assistants* (PDA's), such as the Apple Newton™, may provide less intrusive alternatives. The PDA is a small, pocketsized device that recognizes handwritten communication. PDA's will ultimately be capable of simplifying a variety of tasks in supervision with less intrusion upon the counseling process. These could include:

- two-way, wireless communication
- access to remote locations for database searches or journal inquiry, e.g. ERIC
- phone calls and faxes
- retrieval and printing of forms and documents
- test scoring and interpretation.

Delayed Supervision

After a session is completed, students frequently replay audio and videotapes for supervision purposes. Increased availability and affordability of VCR's has allowed students to review tapes and prepare selected segments for later process in supervision meetings. Dual track recording has allowed supervisors to record comments on one track while the session's original soundtrack is preserved on the alternate track. Dual track recording has also been used to accommodate bilingual translations.

The use of technology in delayed supervision has also been reported to review psychophysiological data where emotional states of the supervisee were inferred from electromyograph (EMG), skin conductance levels(SCL), and skin temperature monitoring. Froehle (1984) described videotaping a split screen, with one camera fixed on the counseling session and a second concurrently filming the psychophysiological readings.

"Disk swapping" between supervisor and supervisee could allow for paperless submission and evaluation of such practicum paperwork as case notes and case studies. These case notes and case studies, combined with segments of videotaped counseling sessions transferred to disc, could lead to an "electronic portfolio" to demonstrate attainment of specific counseling skills competencies.

Internship: Electronic Connectivity

When the supervisee leaves the campus for internship, communication with the supervisor is often limited to phone calls or voice mail messages, periodic supervision meetings held weekly or monthly, and anxiety-filled onsite visits. It can be hours, days, or even weeks before a message is returned.

Advances in electronic connectivity present several innovative possibilities for more efficient internship communication utilizing a computer, modem, phone jack,

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communications software, and an account on an electronic network. The most well known current examples of electronic connectivity are through services such as the Internet, America On-Line™, CompuServ™, and Prodigy™.

Advantages of electronic connectivity might best be observed by examining TeacherNet (Casey, 1990). TeacherNet, begun in 1989 at California State University, Long Beach, links through electronic conferencing and e-mail, 15 student teachers, 7 classroom teachers, and 11 university based resource people (the direct supervisor plus experts in related fields). Members of TeacherNet sign in with their password through their computer and modem to a local phone number. They then check the "teacher's lounge" for public notices that may be of interest and enter reactions or new postings for others to read. They may choose to send or review private communications exchanged with one or several other network participants. Any written communication can be saved on the members' own computer for future reference. Student teachers are given free loan by the university of the hardware and software for the year, in exchange for a commitment to log on daily to the TeacherNet. A 1990 evaluation of the project indicated participants experienced:

- a widespread sense of connectedness over isolation,
- more frequent and more thoughtful contact between supervisor and supervisee,
- expanded opportunities for collaboration and input from a wider spectrum of consultants,
- enthusiasm for the expanded range of topics the network triggered, including job frustrations and satisfactions, classroom management strategies, and career opportunities, and
- satisfaction with efficient exchange of paperless communication that is easily stored, edited, and retrieved.

The International Counselor Network (ICN) is another model of electronic connectivity that can provide supervision opportunities. Accessible through Internet (and America OnLine™ to those without direct Internet connectivity), the ICN operates through Vanderbilt University and offers nonconfidential supervision through hundreds of counseling practitioners and graduate students around the world. Initial public communication through the ICN can lead to direct e-mail communication between individuals. As of January 1994, over 200 counselors subscribed to the ICN. A cursory review of the hundreds of messages posted in 1993 shows discussions on such topics as AIDS/HIV, learning styles inventories, early intervention programs, consultation, child abduction, and suicide prevention. A large, public network like the ICN appears to offer informational resources while a smaller network like TeacherNet seems to emphasize interpersonal process. Other "mailserv's" and "listserv's" of interest to counselors continue to grow through the Internet and elsewhere.

Compressed video is another form of supervision among remote locations. The University of Wyoming coordinates a video telephone conference call among Wyoming counselors at a scheduled, periodic meeting time. Unlike the ICN, the compressed video conference operates in "real time," with all participants on the telephone lines simultaneously.

Limitations and Ethical Considerations

A wide range of limitations and ethical considerations must be considered when using making appropriate use of technology. Confidentiality, for example, is nearly impossible to guarantee when using wireless communication over airwaves or sending messages through the INTERNET. For a more detailed discussion on limitations and ethical considerations, the reader is encouraged to reference Engels et al. (1984) and Phillips (1984).

Summary

Technological advances have created a multitude of challenges and opportunities for counselors in supervision. From practicum to internship, strategies for improving the supervision experience can be utilized with the appropriate ethical integration of technology.

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